

**New Jersey Health Officers Association
Centennial Celebration
1911-2011
Newark Museum
49 Washington Street, Newark
Friday, December 2, 1011**

Delighted to be here to celebrate this significant milestone in the history of the New Jersey Health Officers Association.

On behalf of Governor Chris Christie and the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, I offer congratulations to the New Jersey Health Officers Association and to each of you as you celebrate 100 years of protecting and improving the health of the residents of the state of New Jersey.

It is appropriate that you are returning to your roots tonight by holding your gala in the state's largest city, where your organization began on April 17, 1911.

As a student at Rutgers, I decided on a career in public health because of the challenges involved in improving the health of our communities and the positive impact this work can have on people's lives.

And I'm honored to be here with you today as a health officer.

100 Years of Public Health Achievement

Your centennial is a good time to reflect on the accomplishments of public health in New Jersey over the past century. I know you will see a retrospective in a few minutes from Peter Wenger, an associate professor at the UMDNJ School of Public Health, but I want to take a minute to highlight what our work has done to change lives.

The parents of a child born today do not even need to worry about smallpox or polio thanks to vaccination.

A child born today has access to measles, rubella, tetanus, and influenza vaccines that can prevent serious disease and death.

A child born today has access to cleaner air to breathe, smoke-free public places to play thanks to the New Jersey Smoke Free Air Act and fluoride in water to protect their teeth.

And our roles have evolved over time as well.

Public health preparedness has now become a critical part of our job description. We have learned much from the man-made and natural disasters that we have confronted—

from the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and subsequent anthrax attacks to the floods, hurricanes and blizzards that wreaked havoc in our communities.

We emerged better trained, better prepared and better organized—as we have shown in our response to Hurricane Irene.

In the next 100 years in public health, we are certain to face new threats.

Similarly, a child born today faces new challenges.

Unless we reverse the obesity epidemic, a child born today could be part of the first generation in our nation's history to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents.

Childhood obesity has tripled in the past 30 years in the United States. And, in New Jersey, the obesity rate among low-income, 2-5 year-olds is 17.3%--the highest in the nation. 24% of our population is obese.

Building healthy populations and healthier communities is one of my top priorities.

It is through prevention and intervention—the core tools of public health—that we can reverse this epidemic and control health care costs.

Closing

I just had an opportunity to view the **Generation Fit** exhibit...

As part of tonight's celebration, I hope we can all take pride in our accomplishments.

Congratulations again on reaching this 100 year milestone as a public health organization.

And thank you for inviting me to share this very special evening with you.